

Public Comment

Larry Lobel

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To:Orozco, Uriel uorozco@cityofpetaluma.org

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To the City of Petaluma Historic and Cultural Preservation Committee:

I'm writing to introduce a proposal to place a historic commemorative plaque on the northeast corner of Petaluma Blvd. and Washington street, on the same corner lot where the Bill Soberanes and Wrist Wrestling Championships are commemorated.

I want to inform the committee of an important fact related to that site which is generally unknown. That site was the location of a historically significant event — a piano concert performed there on July 15, 1865 by Louis Moreau Gottschalk, world-famous (at that time) virtuoso pianist and composer. He was the first American composer of serious music to write a symphony, a piano concerto and to achieve worldwide recognition for both his compositions and his artistry on the piano. His wonderful music is performed to this day all over the world and recorded by countless artists. There have been many books written about his extraordinary life.

The importance of that event has been celebrated in Petaluma at least twice; In 1995, Heritage Homes of Petaluma presented a concert-narrative performance by pianist Barbara Geary, and again by a two-piano concert by Marilyn Thompson and Antonio Iturrioz on the 150th anniversary of Gottschalk's performance on July 15, 2015, at the Petaluma Historical Museum.

I propose that a plaque or statue be placed on the site to commemorate this event of great cultural importance. It would give Petaluma recognition for being a cultural center as far back as 1865 (during that tour, the only other place Gottschalk performed in the area was San Francisco). I am willing to make a substantial contribution and do fundraising to help pay for this.

I've researched this event extensively and can provide historical materials supporting the information given above. I appreciate the committee considering this proposal.

Larry Lobel

